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ERIC AND THE JUNIOR COLLEGE.

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TO FACILITATE GATHERING OF RESEARCH AND OTHER INFORMATION, RETRIEVAL SERVICES HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED IN MANY FIELDS. THE ERIC SYSTEM IS A LARGE SCALE PROGRAM TO BRING THE LITERATURE OF THE EDUCATION FIELD UNDER CONTROL. ADMINISTRATIVELY, IT IS A COMBINATION OF CENTRALIZED AND DECENTRALIZED CONTROL, WITH A CENTRAL OFFICE, A DOCUMENT REPRODUCTION SERVICE, AND A NETWORK OF CLEARINGHOUSES, EACH PARTICIPATING IN THE ERIC SYSTEM AND ALSO SERVING ITS OWN SUBJECT FIELD. SINCE SUMMER 1966, THE CLEARINGHOUSE FOR JUNIOR COLLEGE INFORMATION HAS BEEN PROCESSING VARIOUS KINDS OF INFORMATION FOR DISSEMINATION. "FUGITIVE" MATERIALS WERE THE FIRST CONCERN. IN ADDITION TO PROCESSING DOCUMENTS FOR ANNOUNCEMENT IN "RESEARCH IN EDUCATION" AND SUBSEQUENT AVAILABILITY THROUGH THE ERIC DOCUMENT REPRODUCTION SERVICE, THE CLEARINGHOUSE PREPARES A MONTHLY "JUNIOR COLLEGE RESEARCH REVIEW," EACH ISSUE OF WHICH REPRESENTS A COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, OR SUMMARY OF DOCUMENTS ABOUT A SPECIFIC TOPIC RELEVANT TO JUNIOR COLLEGES. THE REVIEW IS PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF JUNIOR COLLEGES. SPECIALIZED BIBLIOGRAPHIES, ASSISTANCE IN INFORMATION RETRIEVAL, PUBLICATIONS AND SYMPOSIUMS ARE OTHER ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES OF THE CLEARINGHOUSE. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN THE "JUNIOR COLLEGE JOURNAL," VOLUME 38, NUMBER 3, NOVEMBER 1967. (WO)

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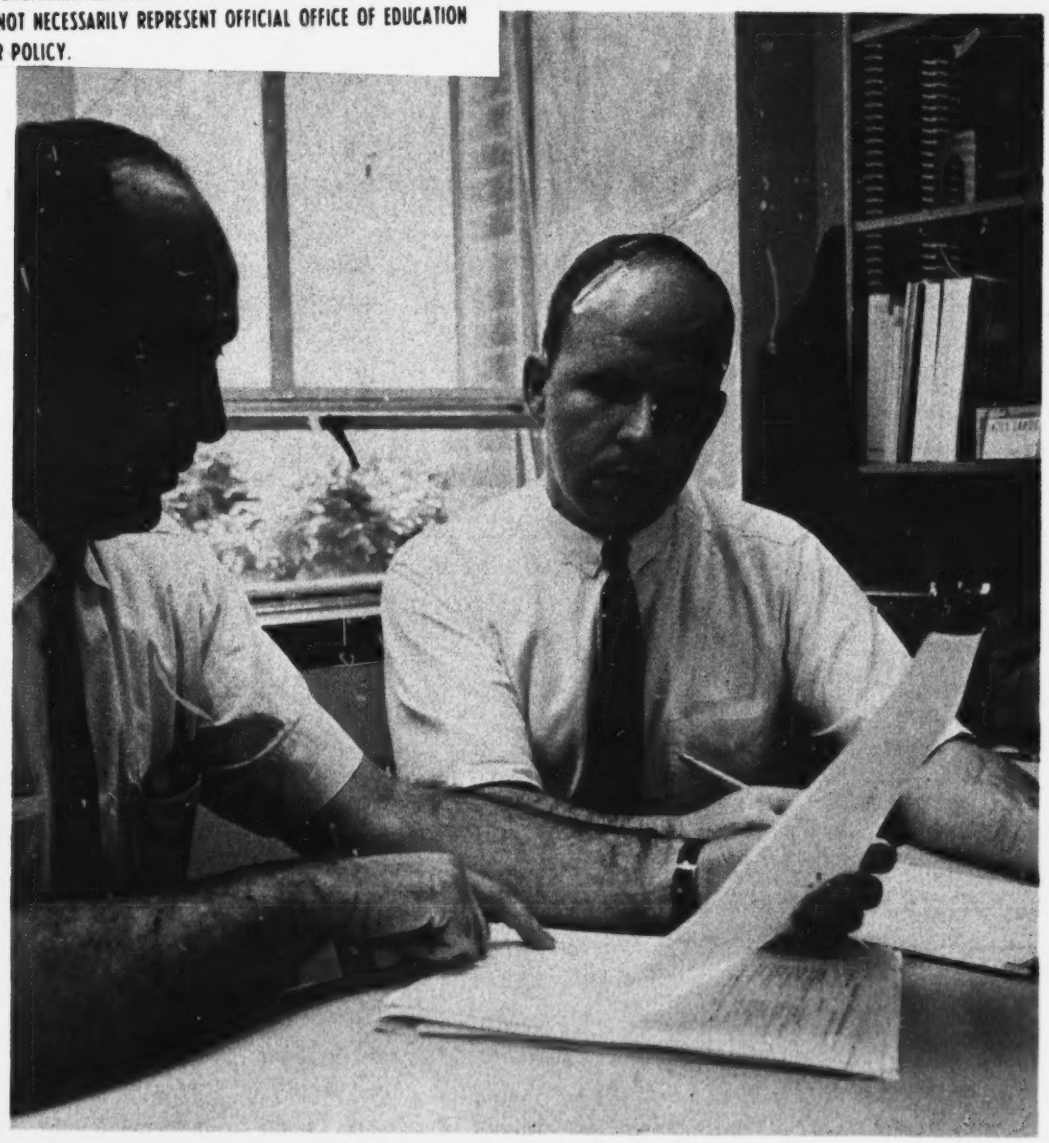

Arthur M. Cohen, left, director of the clearinghouse, with John E. Roueche, associate director.

ERIC and the Junior College

The Clearinghouse for Junior College Information at U.C.L.A. Seeks To Make Available Data That Will Assist in Decision Making

By Arthur M. Cohen

Probably one of these situations arose recently at your junior college:

A new program was being discussed at a meeting of the curriculum committee and someone asked, "How have such curriculums been received in other communities?"

The academic senate decided to seek changes in faculty evaluation procedures, and an instructor wondered, "What criteria do others employ?"

The counseling staff planned a handbook for student self-advising and questioned whether such devices had proved effective elsewhere.

The board met to decide whether or not to appropriate funds for a learning laboratory and a member asked, "Are such installations really worth the expense?"

The research director began a study of students dropping out and wanted information about similar research. What other school like his own had sought the reasons? What had they learned which might help him design his investigation?

If not one of these, then surely a similar situation must have arisen. For change occurs constantly in the dynamic junior college and decisions must be made. The need for rapid, pinpoint information is vital to answer questions such as those posed above.

Data on which decisions may be based are usually gathered from various sources in a fairly haphazard manner. Local references, colleagues' suggestions, knowledge of practices in neighboring institutions, all are useful and are utilized on occasion. Often more helpful, however, are findings of educational research.

But previous studies may be unknown or unavailable to potential users. Formal research is also often burdensome, unwieldy, and overly detailed. Incomplete bibliographic sources for unpublished research and delays associated with published litera-

ture add to the problems of usage. Yet this research must be considered as a potential means of shedding light on recurring questions of planning curriculums for various types of students, organizing programs, designing facilities, and arranging procedures in general.

To help make information in usable form readily available to interested parties, retrieval services have sprung up in many fields during the past decade. Not to be confused with conventional libraries, such services play parts complementary to older, more familiar book and journal collections. They index listed materials, published and unpublished, in many ways, all designed to lead a potential user quickly and directly to just the information he needs. Some of the better known current information retrieval and dissemination activities include those in the fields of chemistry, medicine, and engineering.

ERIC

A large scale attempt to bring the literature of the education field under control began in 1965, when the United States Office of Education established ERIC—the Educational Resources Information Center. ERIC represents a large-scale commitment on the part of the Office of Education to fill what was recognized as a serious gap in the flow of information from one school or part of the education community to others. The Office of Education moved into the field of information retrieval when it realized that the tens of millions of dollars invested in educational research in previous years had made little impact on practices in schools and colleges, classrooms and laboratories. The uncollated research findings and undisseminated reports of procedural successes and failures naturally had had no effect on the decisions made by educational institutions. Furthermore, most school people simply did not and do not have sufficient time to fish out answers from the flood of literature engulfing the field.

ERIC was funded through the U.S. Office of Education, Bureau of Research, and it was set up administratively with a combination of centralized and decentralized control. It is represented by a headquarters office in Washington, a document reproduction service operated by Bell and Howell Company in Cleveland, and a network of "clearinghouses"—each organized to serve a segment of the education community. Each clearinghouse participates in the ERIC system and, in addition, directly serves its own subject field. There are clearinghouses currently operating in various universities and other regional centers.[1] The one serving the junior colleges of America is at the University of California, Los Angeles.

The Clearinghouse for Junior College Information, a joint project of the U.C.L.A. School of Education and the University Library, began operations in summer 1966. Its overriding purpose was to process studies so that information would become available for people making important decisions in junior colleges. Accordingly the clearinghouse set out to acquire, index, and abstract research documents and research-related materials and to disseminate them to the field in a variety of ways.

The first step in document acquisition was deciding which materials were relevant, useful, and most difficult for users to obtain from other sources. The segment of literature in the field which seemed best to fit those criteria was junior college institutional research studies. The initial source for clearinghouse acquisition thus became studies produced by junior colleges about their own operations. In addition, the clearinghouse gathered conference proceedings, seminar papers, and other types of unpublished but potentially useful papers. A few journal articles and monographs of particular interest were also put into the clearinghouse collection but fugitive literature became and remained its prime concern. By the end of its first year, the clearinghouse collection totaled more than one thousand documents.

Dissemination

In order to make information readily available, each document acquired must be indexed and abstracted. Each piece of material is assigned from five to fifteen index terms at the clearinghouse. In addition, an abstract of not more than two hundred words is written. After processing, some documents are sent into the general ERIC system. Others are kept at the clearinghouse for use in answering direct requests for information.

Dissemination of information is made in various ways. Abstracts of all documents which go into central ERIC appear in *Research and Education*[2] and may be purchased from Bell and Howell in microfiche (4 by 6 film card) or hard copy form. Materials which are kept in the local collection may be viewed at the clearinghouse or obtained on microfiche on request.

Some materials are separately collated by the clearinghouse staff and by visiting experts. They are then summarized in *Junior College Research Review*, a monthly newsletter published in cooperation with the American Association of Junior Colleges. (See box.) Each issue of the *Review* is dedicated to a different subject. The first three issues dealt with the success of junior college transfer students; biographical characteristics of junior college students; and curriculum studies in the junior college. Other issues summarize documents which examine various recurring research questions.

AAJC TO PUBLISH RESEARCH REVIEW

The Association has entered into an agreement with the Clearinghouse for Junior College Information at U.C.L.A. whereby AAJC will become the publisher for the newsletter *Junior College Research Review.*

Members of the Association will receive the *Review,* which is published ten times each year. Material for the publication will be prepared by the clearinghouse staff, under the direction of Arthur M. Cohen.

Another form of dissemination is the preparation of specialized bibliographies. The clearinghouse has, in association with the American Association of Junior Colleges, prepared an up-to-date bibliography of doctoral dissertations in the junior college field. Other specialized bibliographies will be undertaken, but the emphasis in the clearinghouse is on *special* bibliographies designed to answer particular requests for information.

Retrieval Requests

The handling of individual requests for information varies according to the type of question asked. For example, if the services which the clearinghouse can provide were well known, each of the persons raising the question posed at the beginning of this article would have written directly seeking an answer. Requests would have been handled as follows:

The question regarding curriculums would have led to a file search to see if recent studies on such programs had been received. If not, the questioner would have been sent *Junior College Research Review,* Volume I, Number 3, which dealt with curriculum studies. He would also have been referred to the ERIC Clearinghouse on Vocational and Technical Education at Ohio State University for further specialized information.

A search using appropriate retrieval terms for faculty evaluation would have been conducted on behalf of the second requester. He would have been sent a set of abstracts of studies dealing with that issue.

The clearinghouse collection includes reports of innovative practices and some special materials such as handbooks for student self-advising. Therefore, the person who asked the question regarding counseling handbooks would have received a note giving the names of institutions in which such practices had been adopted.

The board member who was wondering whether or not learning laboratories were worthwhile would have received abstracts of studies in which that question had been asked.

And the research director who wanted models of studies similar to those which he wanted to conduct would have received microfiche copies of appropriate materials.

Each request for information is treated individually and each receives an answer within the space of time it takes for the next mail to arrive. Issues of the *Review,* abstracts, copies of documents on microfiche, and specialized bibliographies are the most usual methods of answering requests.

Future Directions

In addition to feeding documents into the ERIC system and expanding its own collection, the clearinghouse plans different types of general services to the field. Supporting junior college institutional research is one target. Many gaps in the research literature have appeared since the clearinghouse began operations. Tasks assigned to the junior college research director are often varied and unrelated to attempts to determine the impact of the institution on its students and its community. In an effort to help junior college researchers the clearinghouse is preparing a "how-to-do-it" handbook. Future activities will include symposiums on junior college research and will pinpoint service to researchers based on their particular interests.

The Clearinghouse for Junior College Information cannot be all things to all people in the field. It is designed to supplement existing sources of information but not to supplant them. What it does best is to make research findings available quickly and in such form that they may be used in decision making in the junior colleges. That is its mission. Its success depends largely upon its ability to receive pertinent materials from all possible sources.

Junior college educators should make particular effort to send to the clearinghouse copies of all studies potentially of interest to others in the field. Especially solicited are reports of innovative practices, descriptions of successes and failures in instructional methodologies, community surveys, classroom experiments, and student follow-up studies. To the extent that it is able to bring these fugitive materials under bibliographic control, ERIC and the clearinghouse will be able to serve the junior colleges of the nation.

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[1] Write to ERIC, U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C. 20202, for a list of the clearinghouses and the scope of the field they cover.

[2] Obtainable from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (single copy, $1.00; annual subscription of 12 issues, $11.00).

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